



## Middle School Counselors

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The following counseling information about college planning for middle school families is taken from a report released by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) in December 2007, *From Aspirations to Action: The Role of Middle School Parents in Making the Dream of College a Reality*. It is available at [www.ihep.org](http://www.ihep.org).

### Parent Aspirations

- Most parents want and expect their children to pursue a college education.
- Parents recognize the benefits of higher education.
  - Increased earning potential.

### Parental Planning

- Students look to their parents as a key source of information.
- Many parents wait until their child is in high school before beginning the college planning process.
  - Planning should begin much earlier.

### Financial Planning

- People tend to overestimate the cost of postsecondary education.
- Survey by IHEP found that the majority of parents believe that they are at least partially responsible for paying for their child's postsecondary education.
- Many parents prepare financially for college by:
  - Saving; and
  - Reducing spending.
- Two-thirds of parents with middle school children have not started saving for college expenses.
  - Other priorities.
  - Misconception that they still have enough time to save.
- Many parents hope that financial aid will pay for their child's education but do not actively seek information about aid options.
  - Unaware of available resources.
  - Don't start researching financing options early enough.
  - Unaware of the full range of available financial aid programs.

## Tools and Resources to Promote Financial Planning

### FAFSA4caster

#### ***What is FAFSA4caster?***

- A tool that gives students and families a jump start on planning financially for college.
  - Provides an early estimate of a student's eligibility for a Federal Pell Grant.
- Available at **[www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov)**.
- Does not require students to provide any confidential information, such as their Social Security Number.

#### ***What are the benefits of an early estimate of federal aid eligibility?***

- Gives parents an idea of how much the student could receive in federal grant money.
- Students will be able to add nonfederal aid sources to calculate aid estimates.

### My Future, My Way: How to Go, How to Pay

- Publication from the U.S. Department of Education (ED).
- Workbook for students in middle and junior high schools.
  - Provides information about college and how to pay for education beyond high school.
  - Includes charts, checklists, and activities to help students answer important questions about college.
- Download PDF at **[www.studentaid.ed.gov/resources](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/resources)**
- **[studentaid.ed.gov/sites/default/files/my-future-my-way.pdf](http://studentaid.ed.gov/sites/default/files/my-future-my-way.pdf)**
- Have to scroll down quite a ways to find this document on the page.
- *My Future, My Way* can be used:
  - As a take-home resource with a note to parents.
  - As part of a class.
  - As part of a "getting ready for college" workshop.

### Saving Early = Saving Smart

- New handout from ED.
- Handout for parents with younger children.
  - Provides information about why parents should save early for their child's college education and how they can prepare to pay for college.
  - Includes resources for how to fund education beyond high school.
- Download PDF at **[studentaid.gov/resources](http://studentaid.gov/resources)**
- **[studentaid.gov/sites/default/files/saving-early.pdf](http://studentaid.gov/sites/default/files/saving-early.pdf)**
- *Saving Early = Saving Smart* can be used during:
  - Financial aid presentations.
  - College preparation workshops.

## College Preparation Checklist

- Pamphlet from ED.
- A “to do” list to help students prepare academically and financially for education beyond high school
- Download the PDF at: **[studentaid.gov/resources](http://studentaid.gov/resources)**
- **[studentaid.gov/sites/default/files/college-prep-checklist.pdf](http://studentaid.gov/sites/default/files/college-prep-checklist.pdf)**
- *College Preparation Checklist* can be used as a:
  - Handout during college preparation workshops;
  - Tool during one-on-one counseling sessions; and
  - Take-home exercise for families to complete together.

## NASFAA's *Cash for College*

- Booklet includes the following information:
  - Helpful financial aid hints;
  - Information about college costs;
  - Financial aid and financial need;
  - Kinds of financial aid available;
  - Calculation of EFC;
  - Dependency status;
  - Need-based financial aid;
  - FAFSA process;
  - Comparison of financial aid offers;
  - Merit-based aid;
  - Role of financial aid administrators and financial aid consultant; and
  - Financial aid checklist.
- NASFAA's *Cash for College* can be used:
  - As material available for students to pick up.
  - As part of an individual counseling session.
  - As part of a financial aid night presentation.
- Provide link to on-line version at **[www.nasfaa.org/AnnualPubs/cashforcollege.pdf](http://www.nasfaa.org/AnnualPubs/cashforcollege.pdf)**.

## College Savings Resources

- College Savings Plan Network (CSPL).
  - **[www.collegesavings.org](http://www.collegesavings.org)**.
  - Information available on website includes:
    - Why saving for college is important;
    - What is a 529 plan;
    - A college cost calculator;
    - Links to state 529 plans;
    - A 529 plan comparison tool; and
    - Common questions.

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- Independent 529 Plan.
  - **[www.independent529plan.org](http://www.independent529plan.org).**
  - Available resources include:
    - A calculator to determine a family's college savings needs;
    - A tool to compare college savings options; and
    - Articles, newsletters, podcasts, calculators, and educational links.
- SavingforCollege.com.
  - **[www.SavingforCollege.com](http://www.SavingforCollege.com)**
  - Resources on site include:
    - A tool that rates 529 plans;
    - A tool that compares 529 plans;
    - A college cost calculator; and
    - Questions and Answers.
- MappingYourFuture.com
  - **<http://www.mappingyourfuture.org/MiddleHighSchool/>**
    - A tool that can help middle school students
    - Help 8<sup>th</sup> grade students plan for college now
    - Start a college planning calendar
    - Financial aid terms

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